



## Become Popular on Instagram Phenomenology Study About Creating Popular Accounts in Social Media: Instagram

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### Abstract

This thesis discusses how to form a popular account in social media Instagram done by people from non-artists and not prominent figures in Indonesia. This research uses qualitative research model with descriptive phenomenology method. Participants are three common people who are not artists or figures. Through the foundation on the creation of popular accounts from the general public, this research questioned how to create a popular account in Instagram Social Media. This study produced 4 (four) ways to form popular accounts and increase followers in social media Instagram. These four ways are Consistency, Creating Characteristic Content, Repost, and Giving Expectations to Followers. Research has revealed that informants have no motive for popular. Consistency of account owners in delivering compelling and characteristic content is a more effective way to attract new followers.

Keywords: Instagram; Popular; Popularity; Social Media; Phenomenology

### Introduction

Center of Communication Studies (Puskakom) University of Indonesia in collaboration with the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII), said that at least in 143 million people from around 260 million people in Indonesia are already using the internet and are active users and internet literate, in 2017. When viewed from the previous year (2016) which amounted to 132 million users, the internet users have increased around 10 million. While the research team from the Economic and Business Research and Training Institute, Faculty of Economics and Business, Gajah Mada University (UGM), said that the increasing number of mobile internet users had an impact on Indonesia's economic growth. The research states that every 10 percent increase in



total mobile internet users will impact a 0.4 percent increase in gross domestic product (GDP)

That means information and communication technologies have been rapidly integrated into life, and become very important for social interaction. Especially on business. In daily life, some teenagers think that sending messages is very important to their social relations (Cole et al., 2004). Behavior that previously required individuals to meet each other in previous generations, now can run through digital technology. Thus, behavior is instrumental in controlling one's social and status (Hawley, 1999, 2003)

These conditions create a new patterns in social media platforms and business, called celebrity endorsement that appear in one's social and status control. Adam Minter (2013, in Poghosyan, 2015) mentions, on a worldwide scale, Social Media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are still the most popular and influential platforms in their use to become endorsements capable of changing consumer attitudes (consumer behaviors).

But to become an Endorser, people should have a profiles with 'high' followers (popularity). That is inseparable from the active growth of social media advertising, and social media itself (Halonen-Knight, E. L. 2010). In Indonesia, the presence of social media platforms and the development of social media as discussed, gave birth to a new term, called "Selebgram", "Selebtwit", or "Selebpath". The term comes from Y generation, to describe a popular person (having many followers) in a virtual profile in social media.

Seeing these opportunities, Business in the modern era finally put the media into the marketing strategy in the form of celebrity endorsement. This is done by incorporating communication on some social media, which is now widely used for media marketing that is Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Path and others. Social media is now a part of everyday life. Organizations and producers are looking for gaps in making popularity. The trick is to connect with new friends and build community in the virtual space.

But the entry of business to a more private world like Instagram, Path and Twitter creates a new phenomenon, where 'celebrities' no longer appear from conventional media. An understanding of the celebrity and its popularity shifted slightly toward non-conventional ways. Previously, according to Schlecht (2003) popularity is achieved from a lifestyle that exceeds normal people, interests, and other characteristics that can not be observed, because in general celebrities are very dependent on social norms and enjoy the public's attention. While Friedman (1979) mentions that celebrities (conventionally) are someone who has a global popularity and can be an entertainer or athlete.

The popularity of celebrities in conventional media tends to happen by tracing a career into an actor or public figure, with high intervention from conventional media. While in the context of celebrity Instagram, popular accounts in Instagram media tend to occur suddenly without involving conventional media. Previous studies (Pettijohn, 2012)



mentions a linkage in the high use of social media on a person (facebook) with the number of friends he has. Through the foundation on the creation of popular accounts from the general public, this research is questioned how to create a popular account in Instagram?

### **Literature Review**

This research is based on Uses & Gratification theory. This theory is used because its nature, which is formed to answer what one does to the media, why, and with what effect (Lasswell, 1948). This theory assumes that Individuals choose media and content to meet their needs. In an outline, this theory aims to explain what a Social or Psychological needs of a person influences behavior in using Media (Katz, Blumber, & Gurevitch, 1974). The use of such theory considering that subject, are once is a common people who use social media because of their needs. To determines their motives of using social media.

Katz (1974) concludes that the Uses & Gratification approach concerns social and psychological origins, needs, expectations in the use of media both mass media and other sources, which then leads to a pattern of differential media exposure and create a consequence, which mostly, unintentionally.

This theory applies in explaining the various uses and consequences of the media. The uses & gratification perspectives emphasize that motives, media consumption, and acquired needs can vary among individuals (Papacharissi, 2000). The advent of online technology has re-energized the application of usage and gratuity theory to new media. Compared to active users of traditional media, high levels of interactivity are demanded from new media users, such as the Internet, blogs, and social networks. The inherent nature of social networking has altered the communication features (Ruggiero, 2000).

Uses & Gratification, able to explain how people use social networking for social capital purposes (Social Capital). Therefore, this study adapted several approaches such as social needs, motivation, content to social capital outcomes. This adapted framework can re-test the application of this theory to Social Networking. The results will contribute to the improvement and modernization of uses and gratification theory.

Through various uses and need from social media, comes out motives. And through photo sharing, one can decide what images they want to present on Instagram by uploading different photos or videos, which highlight certain characteristics to maintain a positive impression in front of others (Ellison, Heino and Gibbs, 2006). According to Goffman (1959), self-presentation is based on the "dramaturgy approach" in which people present their own images such as acting on stage. To be more specific, self-presentation involves the performance of the personal image that people perceive by others. Self-presentation is also known as impression management which shows that someone will act intentionally to organize their own impressions according to different situations, to form an image that is appropriate for getting approval from others (Vohs,



et al., 2005; Leary, 1993; Schlenker and Pontari, 2000). The concept of self-presentation will affect the content that a person will present and used to give a certain impression.

Popularity often followed by social impression and number of fans. On social media, Fanbase linkages with popularity expressed by Marwick and Boyd (2011), which describe micro celebrities as a thought as well as a practical set with the audience positioned as a fanbase. Marwick and Boyd argue, popularity is maintained with the management of fans, and self-image is constructed in such a way as the consumption of others. Thus, it can be concluded that the emergence of this micro celebrity is the result of consistent efforts and plans to create products of interest and likability so that he can win the attention of netizens.

### **Research Methods**

This research uses Descriptive Phenomenology method to answer research question. This part will explain the methodological approaches used, and how data can be collected and analyzed. Including how the sampling is done and how the interview will run. The Phenomenology method focuses on describing the similarities that all participants have when they experience phenomena. For example, sadness is universally experienced. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce the individual's experience with a phenomenon in the universal description (van Manen, 1990 in Cresswell, 2007). For this purpose, qualitative researchers will identify a phenomenon or an object of human experience; (van Manen, 1990 in Cresswell, 2007). The questioner then collects data from people who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of experience for all individuals. This description consists of "what" they experience and "how" they experience it (Moustakas, 1994).

This research uses descriptive phenomenology model based on Husserl philosophy. The use of the Phenomenology Method is an adaptation from Moustakas's Psychology Discipline whose function is to explain a phenomenon that occurs based on significant statements of informants and philosophical assumptions (Cresswell, 2007). While this descriptive phenomenology is used to develop the life experience structure of a phenomenon in searching for unity of meaning by identifying the essence of the phenomenon and describing it accurately in everyday life experiences (Rose, Beeby & Parker, in Steubert & Carpenter, 2003). The descriptive phenomenology approach emphasizes the subjectivity of human life experience which means that the researcher does a direct exploration of conscious experience and describes the existing phenomena without being affected by previous theories and assumptions (Streubert & Carpenter, 2003).

### **Informants**

Informants were selected by purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is the selection of samples with certain considerations, which informants selected based



on the criteria and research objectives (Soegiyono, 2007). Sampling is done by directly contacting the owner of popular accounts in accordance with the criteria, and considering the willingness of informants in giving information openly without any influence. While the criteria of informants in this study are accounts that already have an audience, whose popularity is maintained with image management and constructed in such a way for the consumption of the crowd (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Thus it can be summed up the efforts and plans previously performed by this celebrity to create an account of interest and likes, so that he can win the attention from netizens.

#### ***Processing and analysis of data***

The writing of the interview will be done immediately after the interview process. This work is done by making transcripts based on interviews and field notes. Before analyzed, researchers will read to be able to understand the data well, and can perform data analysis. The process of data analysis in qualitative research is done after the data collection is completed from each informant. The data analysis process is done simultaneously with the data collection process and is done based on the stages of Colaizzi (Streubert & Carpenter, 2003).

#### ***Interview***

This research takes data through in-depth interviews. Bryan and Bell describe an in-depth interview (Interview) as a key core to the process of qualitative research. In general, the question won't be the same as a survey, because the question and the interview process is intended to get a reliable and valid results in accordance with the logic of thinking.

### **Research Results**

#### ***Popular Accounts and Motives for Popular***

The results of this study suggests that the motives made by the owners of popular accounts in social media Instagram is not a motive for the popular itself. Spoken by informants, their motives in using social media accounts Instagram is for Self-actualization, Satisfying others and sharing benefits, social motives and not explicitly to add followers. This is similar to Papacharissi, and Rubin (2000) which support the five main motives of Instagram use, where there is no motive for the use of social media as a search for followers or popularity.

Although each has a different motive, the informants agreed by saying not to play social media Instagram to find popularity. Differences of motives revealed from the answers of each informant, and became a benchmark consideration of their own identity. One informant implies that his motive in playing Instagram is to actualize himself and do whatever he wants and can do. According to Djafarova and Trofimenko (2017), Instagram itself became an application most often used to present or present themselves. Because in Social Media Instagram, a person can show themselves visually along with writing (not allowing someone to post something without a picture). And





based on Overup (2012), Social Media Instagram users tend to have their own way to present themselves tailored to who sees their Instagram content.

In general, a person presents himself to others in the most profitable way for them (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). This is consistent with what an informant does, which adjusts the content he/she sends, with the audience who enjoys the account he/she is managing. The way they did it is not in a mainstream way, but by creating a difference in the photos he takes. What they wants to say is that they are not an ordinary account user who daily takes photos of himself (Selfie) like most people, so the actual self-actualization he uses leads to every photo shoot he sends.

This form of self-actualization is supported in research concerning social networking sites that have been done before. The relationship between motivation and the use of social networks has been identified in several studies. For example, Krisanic (2008) shows that motive information and interpersonal motives have a positive relationship with the use of social media up. Facebook users tend to satisfy their needs in interacting and searching for information by using social media facebook more often. Time spent on Facebook is also positively correlated with the motive for self-expression (Dhaha and Igalé (2010) .The research indicates that the motives adopted from this study are closely related to the use of social networking sites.

On the other hand, other informants have different motives for playing instagram. An informant declared the social motive to be the most important thing for him to play social media Instagram. Basically a self-presentation (in the picture) is intended to communicate a person's identity. Self-presentation is also intended to communicate information about how an individual sees a relationship with another person or partner. And ultimately it can affect what others feel about him (Overup, 2012). Since the informant with this social motive has the highest adherence of others, the main content he or she sends is also tailored to what is desired or what is beneficial to his followers. The number of followers or friends in the social media will affect how a person positively presents himself in social media (Kim & Lee, 2011). So for this informant, he chooses to send things that benefit followers and slightly override personal needs. This is repeatedly expressed in his various statements, where he only wants to share with others, and benefit others.

So based on the results obtained, activities with social media Instagram done by the popular account, is based on several motives. For example, is the Interpersonal Communication Motive conducted by the informant. This form of communication is poured through an activity to satisfy and provide social needs for certain people, such as their families, or their immediate followers. Motives Interpersonal communication can be predicted from the form of comments, post, until the form of content provided. Consistent through the opinions of Smock et al (2011), which shows that the motives of social interaction can connect a person with a friend or a nearby person. It is very clear that this can be done easily through content, comments, and other functions in



Instagram social media. Motives for social interaction are also shown from the content given to informants, who say that the content is tailored to what their Instagram followers want. Informants also upload photos and images based on the feelings, experiences, and expressions they want to share with followers. Although Smock (2011) conducted research on Facebook Social Media, Cheung (2014) has mentioned that the motive of doing Instagram greatly affect what someone does with social media Instagram. Especially for Information Finding and Expressing Self (Self Actualization), which is the answer of all informants in this research.

### ***Instagram Followers' Management***

Informants mentioned the lack of specific strategies to increase the number of followers in their social media accounts. However, all informants mention consistency is the main way to gain followers and keep the number of followers who have followed their instagram accounts. This is in line with previous research from Cheung (2014), which mentions a positive relationship between the frequency of instagram use and the number of followers, where the more one accesses social media Instagram, the more followers in social media Instagram. These results are also supported from previous research (Joinsen, 2008 and Pettijohn 2012), which mentions the number of friends on Facebook's social media, in line with the frequency of Facebook social media usage.

The result of the informant interview also mentioned the need for characteristic in every content sent in social media instagram. Informants mentioned the need for a uniqueness and certain characteristics to attract followers. In this case, informants choose to submit and create different content and anti-mainstream when compared with other common accounts. The form of uniqueness is poured as one form of self-presentation where the informant wants a different and different attention from his followers. This phenomenon is explained through the context of interpersonal communication created having social benefits in front of other individuals (Cunningham, 2013). The answer from the informant explains that being a characteristic self tends to be an option and becomes an effective way of attracting followers in Instagram social media. Such action is not expressed as an act of intentionally enhancing followers, but merely an act done on the basis of a personal desire to post a content in its own character.

The answers from the informants also mention that the posted content should also be created similar as the wishes of followers or target followers. Although the informant has no particular motive for gaining popularity, all three informants agree to create a content desired by his followers. The content may involve hobbies or day-to-day activities of the account user. The answer of this informant indicates a desire to give pleasure or satisfaction to their followers, which unwittingly becomes the actual action taken to keep followers from running to another account.



But the informant also felt that this was not enough. With the number of informants with the highest followers of 1 Million people, and at least 100,000 people, the addition of followers actually happens unintentionally. The highest-rated informers get their follower turning point through re-uploads, or endorse from other already popular accounts. Although unintentional by informants, this is the most effective when compared with the deliberate way. Informers who do follow-up search deliberately get fewer followers than those who are endorsed by other accounts that are already popular. Followers' management in their accounts are not done, but followers who get with endorse or other account re-uploads become more durable and consistent than those who do intentionally. Although both have no management to retain Instagram followers, informers who do followers search deliberately acknowledge more effort to keep followers from running away or unfollowing accounts. While those who gain followers through the endorse or unintentional tend to be unconcerned about their followers.

#### ***Adding Instagram Follower Method***

Based on the assessment and analysis that has been done on the interview to the informants, obtained four ways that have been done by the informant consciously or done accidentally. But these four ways are the way things are done and the way the informants get high followers in Instagram social media, regardless of their first motive and purpose in playing Instagram social media and whether they are really looking for followers or not in Instagram social media.

#### ***Consistency***

Consistency refers to the time informant send post Instagram, content submitted, and model that always repeats every day. Every informant has certain things that they unknowingly have sold to followers.

The first informant consistently posted at 5 pm to about 8 pm. His admission also states that the lack of consistency will make him run out of likes and lose likes, compared to the usual amount. The informant also posted a number of photographs ranging from two to three photos per post. In the absence of professional management provided, this account has unconsciously succeeded in attracting followers who share similar interests with the account owner, the result being a self-created management and not assisted by professionals on purpose.

A study conducted by Latergram on the Social Media manager, raises an interesting fact about the time of posting on Instagram. Latergram is a service that allows one to automatically post content within a specified time. This research produces fact one of them is time of Instagram use by society. By 2017, 50% of the Social Media Manager states that the best time to post on Instagram is at night from 7 pm to 9 pm. But in 2018, most of them instead choose lunch time between the hours of 11:00 to 13:00 which became the best time for the post and then followed the night. Quoted from Matt Smith,





who was the founder of Latergram through the Huffington Post, mentioned that uploading photos on Instagram at 5 pm is a great time to get people to see photo uploads of account owners.

However, these three accounts are private accounts that explicitly state that there is no special management to manage Instagram, including the time of post they have. Consistency of time comes only from the habit of informants in playing Instagram.

While in the consistency of content, these three informants show that Content consistency strength is required in maintaining and attracting followers in social media Instagram. All informants perform uploads in nearly identical frames or models, and are performed as daily activities without pauses. While not involved in account management or using account management to add followers, the three informants demonstrated that routine, consistent, and identical daily activities can keep the number of followers they have earned. In the same routine, the three informants got their pattern and each way to keep their popularity in social media Instagram. Whether intentional or not.

### ***Characteristics Content***

The first informant considers what he is doing is a different thing and a uniqueness. Although the study mentions that there are millions of other people doing the same thing, the first informant still considers the content he uploaded is different from other accounts. The informant loudly mentions that he wants to create different content and not just the selfie like most people do. Informant's opinion are true, because based on previous research (Hu, Wang, and Kambhampati, 2013), almost half of the posts circulating in Instagram are self-portraits. With the informant having the intention of not uploading the selfie content, the first informant should have at least different content characteristics than the average person. The type of content he uploads is a landscape, which in other studies is called activity. The content he uploaded from the beginning of Instagram usage successfully attracted the attention of several circles and successfully packaged in the characteristics owned by the account owner, the style of photography and the shots are identical.

Unlike the first informant, the second informant tends not to assume his upload in the intragram has characteristics. What the she's posting is a daily activity of a small child in a family, called Kirana. But the uniqueness comes from some content uploaded by her. Potential followers are presented with the uniqueness of the child's activity, performed by Kirana, the child of the account owner. Many people find it interesting, as the turning point in the followers increase that account tends to happen when the child does something unusual. Such behavior then attracted the attention of other Instagram account owners, and led to an increase in followers in Instagram.

With the uniqueness and the right imagination, the informant actually get the question if Content uploaded in Istagram is not content containing his daughter. Although just asking the news, the recognition from the informants mentioned that the



netizens prefers uploaded content containing Kirana videos compared with other content.

In addition to attracting the attention of citizens, the uniqueness of the content uploaded by the second informant account has also attracted a publisher to create a book based on the activities performed by Kirana. The uniqueness of the uploaded content is labeled the same and flat for everyone, because Kirana has been lifted into a book. It is at this point that the popularity of Instagram social media accounts increases and becomes known to more people.

Informants tend to choose to upload content about make-up, which is the hallmark and ability that he values most strongly. Despite having smaller followers than the other two informant, third informant explains the process of acquiring followers as they are today. As seen, the third informants tend to upload photos that are only related to the world of makeup. And in previous research, Jin Yea, Kyungsik, Patrick, and Lee (2015) mentioned that makeup belongs to the lowest category of choice of citizens. Not up to 5% of the number of photos circulating on Instagram is a photo with the theme of makeup.

But this does not frustrate the desire and interest of informants to make-up. The informant did this upload as a form of activity he liked and he was interested from the beginning. In the recognition of informants, with these characteristics, some citizens are slowly asking things related to makeup, and follow the account of the informant. Informants provide tips on using makeup, information, to services to citizens. By sharing knowledge, informants are able to take a little cake of followers that exist in cyberspace.

The three informants basically do the same thing. Namely upload the things that become their love and things that become their characteristics, regardless of other things. This is in line with previous research conducted by Cheung (2014), Self-Expression being the thing that influences the number of followers in instagram. Motives affect the form of self-expression of the informants, Individuals adopt self-presentation tactics to present themselves as the image desired by others. Since the motive of self-expression is to express and share things about oneself, and the way a person presents himself can influence the perceptions of others, the impression management strategy is needed as a technique for controlling one's self-image in Instagram. Interest and characteristic of a person that is then create interesting things in social media Instagram.

### ***Repost & Endorse***

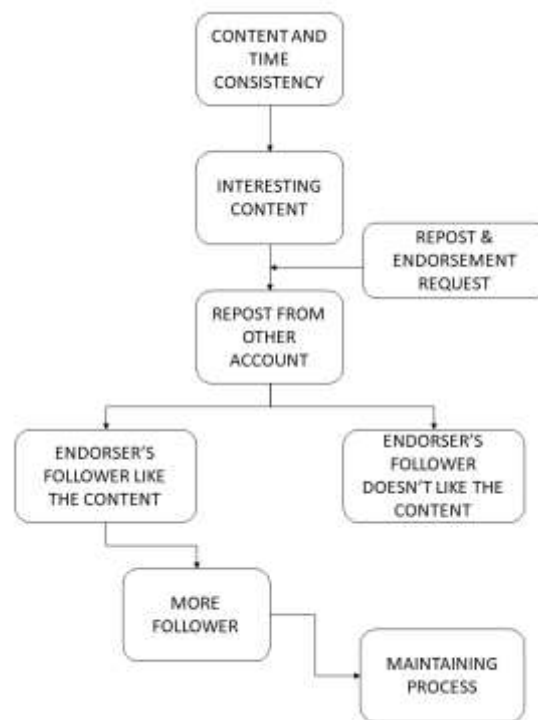
This point becomes the most important thing for informants to gain followers. Being as consistent, compelling, and to the extent that a follower likes the instagram owner uploaded content will be less effective if it is not accompanied by re-uploads and Endorse from other Instagram Accounts.

This is evidenced by the experience of the informants, who claimed to be ignorant and less concerned about the number of followers who are in their Instaram account,

but actually get more followers than the third informant. The turning point and explanation of this repost and Endorse can be explained through the experience of the informant.

### **Followers Addend Framework Scheme**

Based on the categories obtained based on interviews with informants, basically the means obtained based on informant interviews have a relationship and mutually support each other. So the frame of thought that occurs is as follows:



**Figure 1: Instagram Increasing Followers Scheme**

The most important point in the scheme, based on the interpretation of the informant's experience, is a re-upload from another Instagram Account. Based on the informant experience that has been expressed, created a scheme as illustrated above. Content Consistency does not mean a lot when it's not interesting. Netizens tends to see content according to their needs and motives. When consistent content is created does not have a sale value, then it is useless because the content can not attract others to come.

This is where there is a slightly complicated stage. Content that is appealing and consistent uploaded by the account owner should remains to be seen by the Netizen in order to be re-uploaded or promoted to another account. Instagram actually has its own way that uses an attractive fence and text to sort the content that has been uploaded by certain accounts. However, the informant did not share his experience using the hedge



and the influence of the hedge when the content was re-uploaded by the third party. So this factor is not relevant to be discussed more deeply in this research. But in some ways, the account owner can request another account to re-upload the content he/she has created. This is the Endorse process occurs, where the re-upload is done intentionally. However, the experience with informants is very random and tends to be unexpected/unsolicited. Requests for re-uploads are usually paid depending on who uploads them. But what happens to informants is very random with the involvement of millions of followers, and not intentional. It is this factor that may be the material for further research.

After the content has been successfully re-uploaded by another popular account, this is where the sorting process occurs. Assuming the followers of the re-uploader are active and real followers, then over time a number of more netizens can see the original content being uploaded. With note, the original content owner name must be compromised.

But sorting takes place, where not all followers of the re-uploader will directly migrate and follow the original content owner. As already mentioned in many previous studies, the motive becomes a determinant for someone to play social media Instagram. The same thing happens to previously already popular accounts. The followers they have are a combination of citizens who have many motifs and differentities of terror. Netizen that has the same interests as the original account owner, and likes content created, will likely follow up against the original content owner. But those who are not in line, will end up silencing and skip the content. So even though the follower movement gained in the informant experience is quite high (over hundreds of thousands of followers), it still will not rival the number of followers in the re-upload account. The re-upload process performed by other popular accounts tends to be just an opportunity for a Content to be viewed more widely by others.

After the addition of followers has occurred, more people will see uploaded content and self-assess content uploaded by the informant. In this case, the easiest way to keep the number of followers based on the informant's experience is to provide uploads that match those their followers want. The informant believes the warganet follows their account because of the similarity of interest, so they simply keep the followers by keeping the content they provide.

## **Conclusion**

Based on this research, it can be concluded that the most effective way to achieve popularitas in social media Instagram is through Endorsement or through the help of other accounts that are already popular first. In addition, interesting and characteristic content is also one of the elements to create a popular account, because each of the informants has their own characteristics and the value that is highlighted in the content they create in social media instagram.



Research has revealed that informants have no motive for popular. Consistency of account owners in delivering compelling and characteristic content is a more effective way to attract new followers. Therefore, researchers argue that good and characteristic content needs to be developed by Instagram social media account owners so that they can attract the attention of other accounts and gain popularity in social media Instagram.

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